SMOKING, ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE

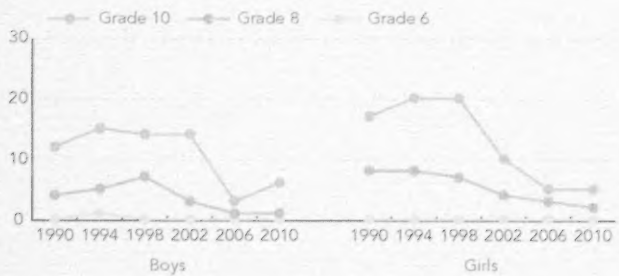
SMOKING, ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE CONTINUE TO BE IMPORTANT PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN CANADA

During the adolescent years many lifelong habits are established that influence health. For many it is a period of experimentation with smoking, alcohol, drugs, and other risky behaviours. For most adolescents these behaviours are occasional in nature and are a common part of growing up, but for some, these behaviours escalate and become serious problems affecting their physical and mental well-being and many aspects of their lives.

YOUTH SMOKING

The HBSC Study has collected data on how often students smoke in every survey since 1990. Daily smoking has remained at 1% or 2% for both boys and girls in Grade 6 across the six cycles of data collection, while for Grade 8 students, 2010 rates are at an all-time low of 2% for boys and 3% for girls. In 2010, 7% of Grade 10 boys and 6% of Grade 10 girls reported smoking daily, as compared to 13% of boys and 18% of girls in1990. These declines are notable, and coincided with the implementation of extensive public health interventions aimed at youth smoking in Canada.

DAILY SMOKING BY YEAR OF SURVEY (%)



This fact sheet was developed from the *Canadian Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children (HBSC)* survey. The HBSC survey has been conducted on six occasions in Canada (since 1989) by the Social Program Evaluation Group at Queen's University. It profiles the health of young Canadians aged 11–15 years. The 2010 Canadian national report focused on mental health. HBSC in Canada is also part of a larger international study conducted in affiliation with the World Health Organization, with similar 2010 surveys administered in 39 mainly European and North American countries. The Canadian study is supported by funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada.

See: Elgar, F. & Pickett, W. (2011). Substance Use and Risky Behaviour. In J. Freeman et al. (Ed.), *The health of Canada's young people: a mental health focus* (pp. 145–166).Ottawa: Public Health Agency of Canada.

For more information about the HBSC study and for Canada-specific data, please visit: www.publichealth.gc.ca

For international data, visit the HBSC global site at: www.hbsc.org

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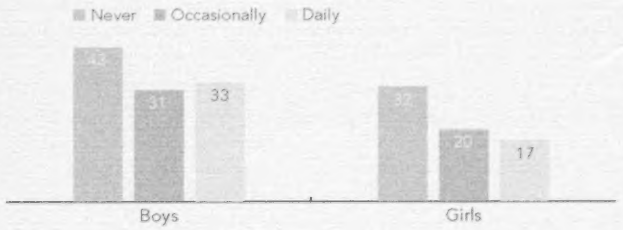
Canada

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SMOKING AND MENTAL HEALTH

For both boys and girls, reports of occasional and daily smoking were related to higher levels of emotional problems and behavioural problems.

HIGH LEVELS OF EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING BY HOW OFTEN THEY SMOKE CIGARETTES (%)



Although the differences in the percentages with high levels of emotional well-being between those who smoke occasionally and those who smoke daily were small, young people who don't smoke at all were more likely to score high on emotional well-being than those who do.

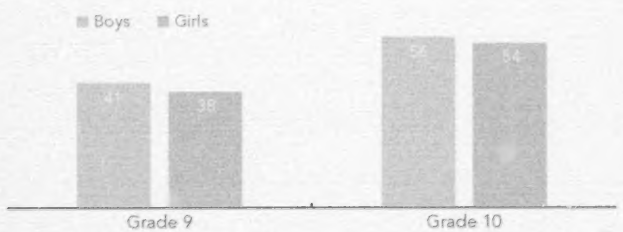
ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Students were asked to indicate how often they drank beer, liquor, wine, or any other alcoholic drink. The rates of drinking any individual type of alcoholic drink have either remained the same, or in the case of beer, have declined over the last 20 years. In 1990 almost one-quarter of Grade 10 students reported drinking beer weekly, whereas in 2010 the numbers dropped to a low of one in ten. However, alcohol is still the most commonly used substance among young Canadians.

Binge drinking

Binge drinking is defined as drinking five or more drinks (four or more for females) on one occasion. More than 50% of Grade 10 students and 40% of Grade 9 students reported binge drinking in the previous year, rates that are high enough to be of concern.

BINGE DRINKING (%)



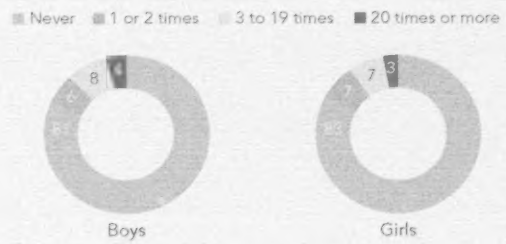
Relationships between binge drinking and mental health

Increased levels of binge drinking for grade 9 and 10 students related to emotional and behavioural problems. Students who reported binge drinking every week were more likely to report emotional problems and more than twice as likely to report behavioural problems as compared to students who binge drank less or not at all.

GRADES 9 AND 10 DRUG USE

Rates of cannabis use reported by Canadian youth are amongst the highest of the 39 countries and regions participating in the 2010 HBSC study.

GRADES 9 AND 10 CANNABIS USE IN LAST 30 DAYS (%)



In 2010, 18% of boys and 17% of girls in Grades 9 and 10 reported they had used cannabis in the last 30 days.

Relationships between cannabis use and mental health

Cannabis use strongly relates to behavioural problems in boys and girls and to emotional problems in girls.

Use of illicit drugs and medical drugs to get high

Although the reported use of illicit drugs and misuse of medical drugs is much lower than cannabis use among Grade 9 and 10 students, the number of young people using these substances and the potential related health risks are still a concern. Substances for which the highest proportions of Grade 9 and 10 students reported use in the last year were: pain relievers such as Oxycontin, and Codeine at 5% for boys and 6 % for girls, ecstasy at 4% for both boys and girls, LSD and other hallucinogens at 4% for boys and 3 % for girls, and salvia at 4% for boys and 2% for girls.

In collaboration with JCSH Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health

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